

# The Journeys Home Survey

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# Acknowledgements

- Australian Government Department of Social Services – *commissioned and funded Journeys Home*
- Fieldwork agency – Roy Morgan Research
- Melbourne Institute research team – *Andrew Bevitt, Abraham Chigavazira, Nicolas Herault, Guy Johnson, Eion Killackey, Julie Moschion, Rosanna Scutella, Yi-ping Tseng, Nicole Watson, Mark Wooden*

# Context

- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007 a new Federal Government was elected.
- Within a fortnight, the new Prime Minister declared that homelessness was a 'national disgrace' and immediately identified homelessness as the Government's highest social policy priority
- \$500m of additional funding for support services over four years (2009-2012), matched by State and Territory governments.
- \$20 billion investment in 20,000 new social and public housing units, many of which were targeted to at risk and homeless persons
- 11.4m to The National Research Agenda, by far the largest single investment in homelessness research in Australia

# Context

- \$5m for a large scale, national longitudinal study that focused on housing instability and homelessness, subsequently called Journeys Home
  - Major step forward
  - For the first time sufficient funding to attempt what had never been done before:  
a longitudinal survey that tracked a national sample of individuals exposed to high levels of housing insecurity with rigorous sampling methods

# Key Design Features

- 6-wave panel; 6-month intervals
  - First wave conducted in Sept to Nov 2011
- Sample
  - Drawn from Centrelink (social security) customers (3 sub-samples)
  - Stratified by region and clustered
- Only follow persons that respond at w1
- F2F (CAPI) interviews wherever possible
  - Telephone is an option
- \$40 incentive per interview
- Ave. interview length =1 hr in w1; =30-40 mins in w2-6

# SAMPLE STRUCTURE (NOT TO SCALE)

Centrelink income support population (4.7m+)

Homelessness flags (42,300)  
-homeless  
-at risk of homelessness

Target population (138,000)  
- includes 'vulnerable to homelessness' group

Study sample (~ 3,000)  
- homeless indicator (~1/3)  
- at risk of homelessness indicator (~1/3)  
- vulnerable to homelessness (~1/3)



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# Response Outcomes, W1

	N	% of total	% of total in-scope
Out-of-scope	273	9.1	
Non-contact	500	16.7	18.4
Other non-response*	529	17.7	19.5
Completed interviews	1682	56.0	<b>61.9</b>
Terminations	8	0.5	0.2
TOTAL sample issued	2992	100.0	

\* Refusal, incapable or contact made but no interview resulted.

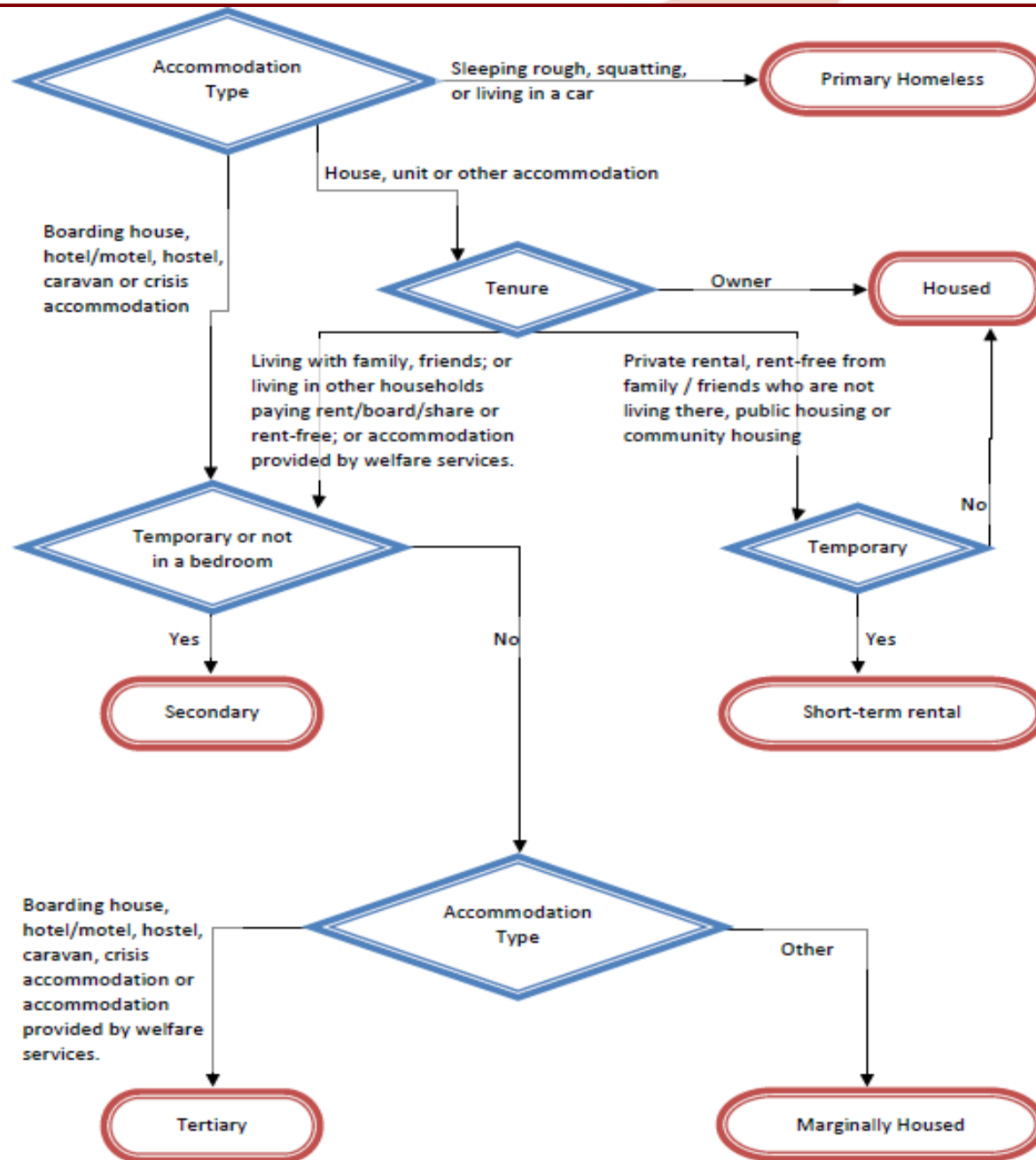
# Response Outcomes, W2 to W6

Outcome	Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4		Wave 5		Wave 6	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Completed interview	1529	90.9	1473	87.6	1454	86.4	1422	84.5	1402	83.4
Out of scope*	22	1.3	47	2.8	52	3.1	51	3.0	65	3.9
Non-contact	68	4.0	70	4.2	85	5.1	77	4.6	82	4.9
Other non-response**	63	3.7	92	5.5	91	5.4	132	7.8	133	7.9
TOTAL (W1 resp'ts)	1682	100	1682	100	1682	100	1682	100	1682	100

\* Out of scope includes persons who: have died; are overseas; are in prison; or are in some other institution.

\*\* This category includes outcomes classified as: refusal, termination, incapable, and contact made but no interview resulted.





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# Homelessness Experience, W1

	Sample Group			Total (%)
	'Homeless' (%)	'At-risk' (%)	'Vulnerable' (%)	
<b>Homeless:</b>				
At time of W1	30.1	27.3	18.7	25.9
Any time in prev 6 mths	56.2	45.7	45.9	49.4
Any time in life	97.2	94.1	89.3	93.8
<b>Total (N)</b>	581	626	475	1682

# Survey Content: Regular

Topic	Notes
Personal details	<i>Some details only collected in W1</i>
Employment	<i>Includes voluntary work</i>
Housing and living arrangements	<i>Includes accommodation calendar</i>
Support services and networks	
Health and well-being	<i>Includes substance use</i>
Contact with justice system	
Exposure to violence	
Income and financial stress	<i>Includes request to link to admin. records. Includes gambling.</i>
Tracking information	

- Responses can be linked to admin income support data (94% consent rate).

# Survey Content: One-off Topics

Wave 1	Wave 5	Wave 6
History	Mobile phone use	Internet use
Family	Diet	Sleep
Housing	Food security	Risk / time preferences
Employment	Personality	Personal control
Contact with justice system		Marital / relationships history
Exposure to violence		Parents' marital history
		Education / care of children

# Research

- A few of examples using the panel dimension: investigating dynamics over the survey
- Cobb-Clark, D.A., Herault, N., Scutella, R. and Tseng, Y.P. (2016). What Drives How Long People Are Homeless?, *Journal of Urban Economics*, (91), 57-72.
  - Method: survival analysis to model exits from two alternative forms of homelessness: sleeping on the streets ('literal homelessness') and not having a home of one's own ('housing insecurity')
  - Results:
    - Duration dependence has an inverted U-shape with exit rates initially increasing (indicating positive duration dependence) and then falling.
    - Exit rates out of both literal homelessness and housing insecurity fall with age.
    - Women are more likely than men to exit housing insecurity for a home of their own, but are less likely to exit literal homelessness.

# Research

- McVicar & al (2015) 'From Substance Use to Homelessness or Vice Versa?', *Social Science and Medicine*, 136-137: 89-98.
  - Method: IFE to control for time-invariant UH & lags to control for reverse causality
  - Results: homelessness does not affect substance use & substance use mostly does not affect homelessness, except risky drinking.

# Research

- A couple of examples using the background information: investigating what drives people into homelessness the first time
  - Bi-variate duration modelling: timing of events to control for reversed causality and allowing the UH for each transition to be correlated.
- ‘Do Childhood Experiences of Parental Separation Lead to Homelessness?’ (Moschion & van Ours)
  - Results: parental separation increases homelessness in subsequent years for boys and girls if the separation occurred before the respondent was 12 years, only boys if >12.
- ‘Early illicit drug use and the age of onset of homelessness’, (McVicar, Moschion & van Ours)
  - Results: taking up cannabis use daily increases homelessness for young men but not women. The use of other illicit drugs has no additional effect on transitions into homelessness for either gender.

# Research

- Food Insecurity and Homelessness in the Journeys Home Survey (Herault & Ribar).
  - Method: multivariate ordered categorical variable models of the association between homelessness and food insecurity; and dummy endogenous variable specifications
  - Results:
    - homelessness is associated with higher (worse) food insecurity for men
    - unconditional associations in the same direction for women, but no conditional association
    - meal consumption, and food expenditures do not show statistically significant (conditional) associations with homelessness



# To sum up

- **Journeys Home: What makes it unique?**

1. Sample of **at-risk individuals**: lots of homelessness exp. but not all respondents! And other related things usually found in too few people to study: subs. use, mental health, incarceration.

⇒ Can identify the factors that precipitate the onset of homelessness

2. Sample from multiple locations, **national coverage**

⇒ Can understand how labour markets or housing markets affect entries and exits from homelessness

3. **Longitudinal/panel** dimension with high retention rate

⇒ Can control for both observed and unobserved individual heterogeneity (FE or RE models)

# To sum up

## ■ Other pros

- The quality of the data is high: response rates, quality of variables on usually poorly measured characteristics (SU, MH, incarceration)
- Very detailed information on current housing: can define different types of homelessness, test robustness to various definitions
- Housing calendar to cover periods between surveys
- Background information: onset of homelessness
- Link to social security datasets

## ■ Cons

- It is not representative of the whole pop, nor of a well defined subpop (e.g. income support recipients)

# Further Information

- Data Survey article – *Australian Economic Review*, September 2012.
- How to get the data:

[https://melbourneinstitute.com/journeys\\_home/research/data\\_access.html](https://melbourneinstitute.com/journeys_home/research/data_access.html)

# Classifying Housing Status

